

Armeno-Indian Epic Parallels

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Sanasar, the founder of the dynasty of heroes of the epic “Daredevils of Sasun,” is the epicized version of the thunder god, who has many common characteristics with the Indian and Hurrian thunder gods. On the other hand, Sanasar’s predecessor Aram, one of the ethnarchs of the Armenian ethnogonic myth, represents the Armenian counterpart of the Indian Rāma, an epicized version of Indra. Mšak, Aram’s governor of Cappadocia, is considered the eponym of the Phrygians. In Armenian and Indian tradition some traces of the Phrygian and Hurrian associations may be found, which may be considered in the historical context.

Thunder god and twins

Manuk Abeghian, considering Sanasar, the hero of the first branch (part) of the epic of Sasun as the epic counterpart of the thunder god, compared him with the Indian Indra (Abeghian 1966: 414 ff.). Truly, Sanasar, the first owner of the “Lightning sword” and dragon slayer, would represent the epicized figure of the god of lightning and thunder, the dragon slayer. Sanasar’s mother, the progenitress of the heroes’ race is called Covinar, which means ‘lightning’ in dialects. In folklore texts, she appears as a thunder goddess, a woman with fiery eyes sometimes disguised as a man. She “plays (= dances) in the clouds” on horseback during thunderstorms, and the thunder is the clatter of her fiery horse’s hoofs (Abeghian 1899: 83-86). Sanasar has a twin brother, Bałdasar, similar to Indra, who also has a twin brother (the fire god Agni).

Thus, Indra-Agni, verily your greatness merits loftiest praise, Sprung from one common father, brothers, twins are ye... (*Rig-Veda* VI.59.2, see Griffith 1992: 322).

Fiery horse in the water

The horse and horse related deities have an important function in Indo-European mythology. The twins are connected with horses (e.g., Ind. Aśvins; Anglo-Sax. Hengist and Horsa, etc.). In the “Daredevils of Sasun,” Sanasar’s *hrelen* ‘fiery’ horse becomes the military assistant of his offsprings, heroes of all generations. Sanasar finds it in the depths of a lake with the “Lighting sword” and other weaponry. In one episode, Sanasar and Bałdasar crush their enemies “as the horse crushes its barley” (incorrectly translated in DS: 53-54 /wheat instead of barley/), and, in several variants, they are engaged as the grooms of the king (e.g., DdS: 41; in the *Mahābhārata*, the twin brothers Nakula and Sahadeva appear as the horse groom and cattleman of the king respectively). A parallel motif of Indra’s fiery horse in the waters is found in the *Mahābhārata* (I.3.153).

That horse which was born from the depths of water in the ancient past, [which is] the fiery Vaiśvānara, is furnished as your horse...

Horse and twins

In a variant of the “Daredevils of Sasun,” Sanasar and Bałdasar were conceived when the princess Sařan (a version of Covinar) drank water from the footprints of a horse (SCI: 1028-1031). The consideration of this tale shows that the fiery horse was to be the father of the twins (Harutyunyan 2000: 349-350).

This story is best comparable with the myth of conception of the Indic Aśvins. After the god Tvaṣṭṛ gave his daughter Saranyū (Ind. ‘Quick, Swift’) in marriage to Vivasvat (a sun deity), she escaped from him taking on the form of a mare. Vivasvat, metamorphosed into a stallion, managed to catch and rape her, and the Aśvins were born of this union (for the myth of Saranyū in this context, see Dexter 1990: 287, note also that the forefather of humanity Manu and his brother Yama ‘Twin’ figure as the mortal sons of Vivasvat and Saranyū). Remarkably, the name of Sařan coincides with Saranyū (Petrosyan, Petrosyan 2000: 12: in Armenian the final vowel of the words disappeared in the first centuries AD), and the rough ṛ instead of smooth r is to be explained as the result of influence of the biblical name Sařa (= Sarah/).

The black hero

Sanasar, after his fight with the dragon, calls himself “the black cloud of Sasun” who brought rainstorm (DS: 83; for this observation, see Abeghian 1965: 417). Thus his figure coincides with that of the Indian heir of the Indo-European thunder god Parjanya who is identified with Indra and the rain/thunder cloud (see, e.g., Toporov 1982: 286; Puhvel 1987: 226; Mayrhofer 1996: 96-97; note that in the Caucasus also the thunder god occurs as a “black hero,” see Dalgal 1969: 111-112).

Rāma, the hero of the *Rāmāyana*, represents one of the epicized versions of Indra (Puhvel 1987: 92-93). His name is connected with Ind. *rāma* ‘dark, black’ from IE **rē-mo-* (**Hreh₁mo-*, see Puhvel 1987: 90; Mayrhofer 1996: 449). Notably, Indra, who is invoked as “illustrious one, who wears the black cloth” (*Mahābhārata* I.3.152), also can be considered in this context. In Armenian tradition **rē-mo-* (**h₂reh₁mo-*) occurs in the name of the ethnogonic patriarch Aram, early epicized version of the thunder god, predecessor of Sanasar (see Petrosyan 2002: 43 ff.).

The conception of twins.

Indra is called *Āptya* ‘of water.’ Likewise, Sanasar is frequently called *covayin* ‘of sea.’ His mother’s name Covinar is associated with *cov* ‘sea’ etc (Abeghian 1966: 406-409).¹ This is how Sanasar and Baldasar were conceived.

She (Covinar – A.P.) cupped her hands and drank a cupped
handful
And a half-a-cupped handful of water
From that life giving spring (DS: 12-13; cf. DdS: 37).

The mothers of Rāma (the namesake of Sanasar’s

¹As noted, Sanasar entered an undersea kingdom to obtain his magic horse and weapons. When he tried to mount the fiery horse, the horse said: “-I will take you to the sun to burn./ Sanasar said: -I am sea born (*covayin*),/ I will role under your belly./ The horse said: -I will take you down/ To the bowels of the earth, the infernal regions./ Sanasar said: -I am sea-born,/ I will cling to your back” (DS: 47). Sanasar and Baldasar founded their city Sasun at the source of a little subsidiary stream (that “came leaping down from the mountains and struck the river with such force that it split it in two”) of the Batman River, one of the tributaries of the Tigris (DdS: 44).

predecessor Aram) and his twin brothers, heroes of the *Rāmāyana*, become pregnant by drinking *payas*, a milky beverage or porridge (for the comparison of those Armenian and Indian tales, see Grintser 1974: 214-215; Ahyan 1985: 33: note also that the “life giving spring” of Covinar may be identified with the “milky spring” of other episodes of the epic, see Harutyunyan 2000: 80). The first wife of the king, Rāma’s mother, received half of the *payas*, the remaining half again halved was given to the second one, half of what she left was received by the third wife, and the remainder was given again to the second wife (*Rāmāyana* I.7). Consequently, Rāma and his brothers were born. The second wife gave birth to twins, who were conceived with the one fourth and one eighth parts of the *payas*. The first of them became the companion of Rāma (note that the ratio of the *payas* to their conception was also 2:1), and the second one followed the son of the third wife. It is obvious that apart from a typical Indian tendency to duplicate and proliferate characters the tales of births of the Indian and Armenian heroes are almost identical.

Hurrian associations

In the 13th century BC, the name of the Hurrian thunder/storm god Teššub is known as a part of a theophoric dynastic name Ehli-Tešub of the kingdom of Alzi/Alše (Kosyan 2013: 390). This land corresponds to the Armenian province Aljnik', which included the Sasun region. Moreover, until the 7th century BC, when the Hurrian ethnic element disappeared elsewhere, Teššub remained the central divine figure of the region of Sasun and surroundings (the ancient kingdom of Šubria), cf. the names of their kings and princes: Ligi-Tešub, Šerpi-Tešub, Kali-Tešub, Kili-Tešub, Šadi-Tešub, Ḥu-Tešub, Ik-Tešub, [...]gi-Tešub (Gelb 1944: 82-83; Hmayakyan 1990: 43; Grekyan MS). The oldest cult center of Teššub and his Urartian cognate Teišeba was the land Kumme/Qumenu, to the southeast of Sasun (for Kumme/Qumenu and its localization, see Arutyunyan 1985: 119-122; Petrosyan 2012: 142-147). Notably, two variants of this theonym are preserved in the traditional refrains of the songs of the Sasun and adjacent Muš region (Petrosyan 2012: 149).

In the Song of Kumarbi, a Hurrian mythological

poem attested in Hittite, the god Kumarbi swallowed the “manhood” of the sky god Anu, king of the gods, and drove Anu from the throne, but he himself was impregnated by the seed of Anu. Anu spoke to Kumarbi:

Stop rejoicing within yourself! I have placed inside you a burden. First, I have impregnated you with the noble Storm god (Teššub). Second, I have impregnated you with the irresistible Tigris River. Third, I have impregnated you with the noble Tašmišu. Three terrible gods I have placed inside you as burdens (Hoffner 1990: 40-41).

Subsequently Teššub, Tašmišu, and the deity of the Tigris River were born. Teššub dethroned Kumarbi and gained the throne of the gods. The birth of the god of the Tigris River and his twin siblings would occur, obviously, somewhere in the headwaters of the river. Thus Teššub and his twin brother Tašmišu, who was also his vizier, correspond with Sanasar, the epic version of the thunder god and his twin brother and assistant Bałdasar, who found the city of Sasun at one of the sources of the Tigris River.

Phrygian (Mushkian) associations

In the archaic versions of the epic of Sasun, attested in the books of foreign authors Pseudo-Waqidi (12th century) and Sharaf-khan (17th century), in Arabic and Persian respectively, Sanasar figures as the eponym of Sasun, while his son Muš eponymizes the city of Muš and the Muš valley to the north of Sasun, modern Turkish Muş (Ter-Ghevondyan 1978).

Aram, the predecessor of Sanasar, performed in battle many heroic deeds and extended the borders of Armenia on every side, so the other peoples began to call the land Hayk' (Arm. ‘Armenia’) Armenia by his name (Khorenatsi I.12-14). Aram's most mythological battle with the Titanid Payapis K'ałeay occurred in Cappadocia, near Mt. Argeus (modern Turkish Erciyes Dağı). He left to rule the country a certain Mšak of his own family, who later built the city of Mazaka there (modern Kayseri). In this context Sanasar's son Muš

corresponds with Aram's governor Mšak, whose name is a hypocoristic form of Muš (Muš-ak > Mšak).

The Assyrian sources mention the tribes of *Mušku* and *Urumaia* 'Urumaeans' which in 12th century BC attacked the borders of Assyria and settled in the land Alzi (Grayson 1976, №№ 18, 67, 93). In Armenology, Aram and Mšak are considered the eponyms of those tribes (see, e.g., Manadyan 1984: 559; Kapantsyan 1956: 147; Yeremyan 1971: 234, 237; Sargsyan 1988: 59).

Mušku/i was the Assyrian and Urartian denomination of the Phrygians, attested in the 8th-7th centuries BC, when they reached Cappadocia. Probably, it was the self-designation of the Phrygians (Kopanias 2012: 215-216). Thus the 12th century BC Mushkians are to be considered the Eastern branch of the Phrygians. The different localizations of Muš and Mšak (in Armenia and Cappadocia) may be explained by their movements. The Pontic Mosch tribe mentioned in Greek sources (Μόσχοι) also could be identified as a branch of the *Mušku*-Phrygians (note that Assyrian cuneiform š = s/š, k = k^h, and u = u/o, thus the cuneiform *Mušku* may be read, e.g., *Mosk^ho*/*Musk^ho*/*Mosk^ho*/*Mušk^ho* etc).²

In Urartian sources the region of Muš is referred to as the land of Urme (Arutyunyan 1985: 210-211), which is juxtaposed with the ethnonym of the Urumaeans (Sargsyan 1988: 58-59). On the other hand, the toponym Muš itself is considered to be associated with the ethnonym *Mušku* (Diakonoff 1984: 195 n. 87; 1992). This etymology is based on the contemporary reading of the cuneiform *Mušku* and should be rectified. Based on the above, Muš can be derived from *Mosk^ho*/*Musk^ho*/*Mušk^ho* (> *Mušo* > Muš, gen. *Mšoy*, see Petrosyan 2002: 140; for the Armenian change *sk^h > š, see Djahukian 1984: 158-160). This may corroborate the identification of Aram and Mšak as the respective eponyms of the Urumaeans and Mushkians, as well

²For the Mushkians in general, see Wittke 2004; Kopanias 2012, with bibliography; for the Eastern Mushkians, as the Proto-Armenians: Diakonoff 1984: 119 et passim; as a Georgian tribe: Melikishvili 1954: 410 f. (Diakonoff's and Melikishvili's ideas are not supported by contemporary scholars). For the ethnonym *Mušku/i*, Moschoi, Hebrew Mšk and related questions, see Diakonoff 1984: 115 ff.; Petrosyan 2002: 139 ff.; 2012: 280-282, with bibliography.

as the predecessors of Sanasar and Muš.³

Armenian, Indian and Hurrian associations

Now, let us compare some myths of Aram, Rāma and Teššub.

a) Aram defeats his most mythological adversary near Mt. Argaeus (for the elaboration of this myth, see Markwart 1919: 65 ff; 1928: 219 ff; Petrosyan 2002: 43-45). This mountain is called Harga in Hittite and is to be derived from IE **h₂erg-* ‘bright, white’ (Laroche 1985: 88-89). This myth is considered in the context of the Indo-European “black and white” myth, where the names of heroes are derived from **h₂reh₁mo-* ‘dark, black’ and **h₂erg-* respectively (Petrosyan 2002: 43 ff).⁴ In the place of his victory Aram leaves his family member Mšak as a governor. Other nations began calling the Hay people as Armenians by the name of Aram.

b) Rāma is the name of several Indian heroes. The first of them, Paraśurāma ‘Rāma with the axe’, defeats Arjuna (< **h₂erg-*) Kārtavīrya, the king of the legendary tribe of Haihayas (*Mahābhārata* III.115-116). According to the legends, Paraśurāma appointed Rāmaghata Mūṣika the first king of *Muṣaka Rajya* ‘Mushika kingdom’ (see, e.g., Rangacharya 1937: 545; Varma 2012: 17).⁵

³The cuneiform *urum-*, i.e., *orom-*, may reflect, e.g., the local dialectal pronunciation of *aram-*, see Sargsyan 1988: 101; for *a/o* alternation, see also Djahukian 1987: 288. On the other hand, the local *Orom-* could have been transformed into Aram under the influence of the name of the first Urartian king Aramu and/or the biblical (Aramaean) eponym Aram, see Markwart 1928: 215, 224 seq. However that may be, the ethnic origins of the Urumaeans remains unclear, see Diakonoff 1984: 121.

⁴Obviously, the myth of the contrast between black and white could be recreated time and time again in later epochs. Nevertheless, in this reconstruction the names of the opposing figures are **h₂reh₁mo-* and **h₂erg-* (**rēmo-* and **arg-*). Apart from Indic, one or both of those roots are lost in the languages where the traces of the myth are found. A myth reconstructed with such names would necessarily derive from earliest times before the process of linguistic diversification, see Petrosyan 2011: 146.

⁵In this myth, Mūṣika may be explained in connection with Ind. *mūṣ*, *mūṣaka*, *mūṣika* ‘mouse, rat’ (the name of the first capital of the kingdom is explained as ‘Rat Hill’ in the local Malayalam language, yet this is probably a folk etymology, see Logan 2000: 6). According to one opinion, the ethnonym Mušku is associated with that of the Mysians (Diakonoff 1984: 119, with

c) One of the most powerful adversaries of Teššub was the deity Silver (Hoffner 1988; 1990: 45-48). Remarkably, in this myth, also attested in Hittite, the name of Silver was to be represented by the Hittite reflex of IE **h₂erg'-* (Hoffner 1988: 163). In this context, it is notable that the thunder/weather god of ancient Anatolia was connected with black color: during his rituals, black vessels were used and sacrifices of black bread and animals (sheep, bulls) were made (Ardzinba 1982: 213-214).

The fight between Teššub and Silver can be localized somewhere not far from the city of Kummia/ Kummana (the Hurro-Hittite cult center of Teššub in Cappadocia), in the Silver Mountains. The thunder/weather god was worshiped on Mt. Argaeus since high antiquity (Börker-Klähn 1989: 243-245), so this area could also be considered as one of the locales of the presumable battle between Teššub and Silver. Hence, Aram who defeats his adversary in the locality of Mt. Argaeus may be equated with Teššub. Moreover, Aram, the Armenian namesake of Rāma, may be considered the Armenian name/epithet of Teššub.

On the other hand, Teššub is most comparable with Paraśurāma. Teššub, like the other ancient Near-Eastern thunder/weather gods, was armed with an ax or double ax (Diakonoff 1990: 142), which parallels with the figure of Paraśurāma 'Rāma with the ax.' *Paraśu* 'ax, double ax' the weapon of Paraśurāma, according to a widely accepted etymology is an Akkadian borrowing (Gamkrelidze, Ivanov 1984: 716, n. 1, 2; Makkay 1998; cf. Mayrhofer 1996: 87), thus the figure of Paraśurāma, probably, was borrowed from the ancient Near-East. The opposition of the Hurrian thunder god and Silver is not comprehensible. It may be simply interpreted in the context of the Indo-European "black and white myth." Moreover, the names of Teššub and his principal adversary may be interpreted as Indo-European borrowings (Petrosyan 2012: 148-149; 2016: 134-135). That is, we may assume that the myths of the Teššub cycle have been developed under Indo-European influence.

bibliography), which, in its turn, may be derived from the same Indo-European **mūs-* 'mouse' (Toporov 1977; cf. Petrosyan 2002: 140-142). However, these might be merely folk etymological associations.

Aram	< * <i>h₂reh₁mo-</i> 'dark, black'	Defeats Payapis near Mt. Argaeus (< * <i>h₂erg</i> '- 'white, silvery')	Appoints his relative Mšak as the governor of Cappadocia	Other nations begin to call the Hay people Armen by his name
Paraśurāma	< * <i>h₂reh₁mo-</i> 'dark, black,' axe wielder	Defeats Arjuna (< * <i>h₂erg</i> '-)	Appoints Rāmaghata Mūšika the king of Kerala	Defeats the king of the Haihaya tribe
Tešsub	Ax-wielder, associated with the black color	Defeats the deity Silver (* <i>h₂erg</i> '-)		

Here also, as in the case of the myth of the births of Sanasar, Tešsub and Rāma, the Armenian heroes are localized in the same area as the Hurrian gods, yet Aram's figure and myth are closer to those of Paraśurāma.

Armenians and Phrygians

Paraśurāma who killed Arjuna, the king of the Haihaya tribe, was a Bhargava (member of Bhṛgu's tribe). He also established Kerala, one of dynasties of which was called Mūšika. Notably, the Indian scholars have viewed the names Bhṛgu and Mūšika in connection with the Phrygian ethnonyms *Phryg-* (> *bhṛg-*) and *Mušk-* (see, e.g., Rangacharya 1935: 174, apud B. Shastri; Dikshit 1960: 436; Kosambi 1968: 89; Chatterji 1977: 51; see also Klein 2007: 108-120).

According to Herodotus (7.73), the Armenians were "Phrygian immigrants" (*Φρυγῶν ἄποικοι*), while according to a passage from Eudoxus of Cnidus (the 4th century BC, attested by Stephanus of Bysantium in the 12th century AD), the Armenian language resembled Phrygian (see Petrosyan 2007: 27, with bibliography). This is not the case: Phrygian was much more closer to Greek (those two languages are probably derived from a common ancestor spoken at the end of the third millennium BC in the Balkans, see Ligorio, Lubotsky 2013: 181).

Mšak, the eponym of the Phrygians is represented as a family member of Aram. Thus, Aram could also be regarded as a Phrygian hero. Why do the other nations call the Armenians by the ethnonym Armen (eponymized by Aram), while the Armenians call themselves Hay (eponymized by the first ethnogonic patriarch Hayk)? It has been hypothesized since the 19th century that this may reflect the existence of two components of the Armenian people: the tribe of Hays and Armen (Patkanov 1881: 88-90; Barseghyan 1997: 146-148). In the context of the above, Aram's becoming the second Armenian eponym may theoretically be interpreted as a reflection of the immigration of the (Eastern) Phrygians and constituting a part of the Hay tribe (12th century BC), while the tale of Aram and his relative Mšak would reflect the Phrygian occupation of Cappadocia (8th century BC). Of course, hypothetically the victory of Paraśurāma over the Haihaya tribe could also be interpreted in a similar way.

Conclusion

1. The Armenian language in its Indo-European context is close to Greek and the Indo-Iranian languages (Martirosyan 2013, with bibliography). This may explain some of the adduced parallels (thunder god as a twin character, horse and twins, birth of the twins, the black hero).
2. Mitanni-Hanigalbat, the most significant Hurrian kingdom arose in Northern Mesopotamia and Syria (the 17th-14th centuries BC). The Sasun region and Alzi constituted a part of Mitanni, while the capital city and main centers of the kingdom were situated in the upper reaches of the Habur River, to the south of the Sasun. In Mitanni, an Indo-Iranian (possibly, Indo-Aryan) language is attested by a number of proper names of the kings and gods, including the namesakes of the Indic gods Mitra, Varuna, Indra, and Nasatyas (Aśvins). Obviously, some of the parallels may be explained as the "Mittannian Indo-Iranian" borrowings into Armenian (e.g., the tale of Saaran).
3. On the other hand, there are facts which may evidence the ancient Near-Eastern influence on Indian mythology (cf. the image of Paraśurāma). Moreover, in ancient Indian tradition some reflections of the early ethnic history of the Armenian Highland and Asia Minor may be found.

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